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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

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SUBJECT: Update on Murder of AmCit Dorothy Mae Stang

Ref: Brasilia 00369

1. (U) This cable is Sensitive But Unclassified.

2. (SBU) Summary. Warrants for the arrests of three individuals for the murder of Amcit Dorothy Mae Stang have been issued; the suspects are still at large. Violence continues in the region, with the murder of the leader of a landless community. The Stang murder continues to receive a great deal of Brazilian government and public attention. The federal government has sent 2,000 troops to the area to support the police, established a large environmental protection area, and appropriately land to be handed over to the landless. The Ambassador stressed USG interest in a meeting with Foreign Ministry officials. USDOJ is interested in pursuing a U.S. indictment; LEGATT is discussing FBI involvement in the case with Brazilian law enforcement authorities. End Summary.

3. (U) A state judge issued warrants for the arrests of three individuals for the murder of Dorothy Stang. (Brazilian federal authorities are looking into the possibility of re-indicting using criminal statutes that would transfer jurisdiction to the federal authorities.) Two of the suspects were identified only as "Raifran" and "Eduardo," the alleged gunmen. The third person is rancher Vitalmiro Bastos de Moura, alias "Bida," accused of ordering the hit. Press stories have accused a fourth individual, rancher Amair Feijoli da Cunha, alias "Tato," as being the go-between for Bastos de Moura and the gunmen. All four are at large and presumed to be hiding in the jungle.

4. (U) In a meeting with the Ambassador, Foreign Ministry UnderSecretary Ruy Nunes Pinot Nogueira pledged that the government would make the "utmost effort" to capture and prosecute the murderers. He said he was encouraged by the reaction to the murder throughout Brazil and noted that Stang was a Brazilian, as well as U.S., citizen. The Ambassador stressed the USG's strong interest in the case.

5. (U) Violence in Para continued, with the shooting death of Soares da Costa Filho, the leader of a temporary camp of landless peasants near the town of Parauapebas in southern Para, on February 15. No arrests have been made. Authorities do not know whether Costa Filho was killed in a dispute within the landless movement or by large landowners. Counting the February 12 murders in the town of Anapu of Stang and Adalberto Xavier Leal (separate events), Costa Filho is the third murder linked to agrarian reform in Para this week. It is not clear that the three killings are directly related or more broadly reflect the recent tensions in the state.

6. (U) Stang's murder continues to receive a great deal of government and press attention in Brazil. Following an emergency cabinet meeting Tuesday night, the government ordered 2,000 troops into the area around Anapu, Para. According to press, the troops mandate is to keep the two sides involved in the land dispute apart, to disarm the two sides, and to assist police in the manhunt for Stang's killers. An official with the federal Ministry of Agrarian Development said Army and Federal Police forces were being deployed to the area to guarantee the security of the landless families being settled there. An initial contingent of 140 soldiers arrived in Anapu on February 16.

7. (U) High-level GoB officials are engaged on the issue. Vice President Jose Alencar, Lula's Chief of Staff Jose Dirceu, and seven other cabinet ministers met with the Governor of Para, Simao Jatene, on February 15. Dirceu later told the press, "The nation can be certain that there will be no impunity, neither for the higher-ups nor the gunmen. It's time for us to say 'enough' to these activities." Dirceu announced that the GoB would speed up its land reform and environmental projects in the area. Environment Minister Marina Silva, herself a veteran of the Amazon's environmental wars, declared, "Some people don't want to behave legally. They can

either get legal or go to jail." Subsequently, the government announced the establishment of a four million hectare environmental protection area near Anapu and said that it would appropriate all of the lands (54,000 hectares) near the town of Anapu that generated the conflicts leading to the Stang and Leal murders and redistribute them to landless families.

18. (U) Separately, Para Governor Jatene announced that he would accelerate the state's existing land use plans to clearly demarcate protected forest from land available for development. Jatene admitted to the press that the remote region is difficult to police, adding that he has deployed 100 additional state police there in recent days.

19. (U) Much of the land in question is tied up in court because of complaints by local residents and officials that the landowners used it as collateral for government loans on the condition that they retain it as virgin forest, but after the loans were issued, the lands were clear cut for timber and cattle grazing. It is the slowness of the federal government and the courts in seizing and redistributing these lands, and the perception that local judges have unduly favored the landowners, that sparked the recent round of tensions. Sister Dorothy Stang was working with the peasants in the area to create sustainable development projects.

110. (U) The Army will establish a series of temporary bases (with no fixed end-date) to support inspections of improper land use, deforestation, and slave labor. The Army is working with GoB land reform and environmental agencies to identify the best locations for the bases. Army command has announced the troops will receive overhead support from the Air Force and will be commanded by General Jairo Cesar Nass, based in Altamira, Para. Forces will be drawn from units based in Manaus, Belem, and Maraba (Para). State police forces have announced that they hope to take advantage of the Army's presence to execute several existing arrest warrants that they have not been able to carry out because of the high tensions in the area.

111. (SBU) The Washington, D.C. United States Attorneys Office's Transnational Crime Unit has reviewed the preliminary facts of the case and is interested in pursuing a U.S. indictment and possible prosecution in Stang's murder. (DOJ does understand that the individuals allegedly responsible for the murders are Brazilian and cannot be extradited from Brazil due Brazilian constitutional prohibitions.) The FBI's Extraterritorial Squad (based in Miami) is planning to send two agents to Brazil to assist with the U.S. investigation, with the anticipated arrival date sometime the week of February 21, pending LEGATT consultations with Brazilian law enforcement authorities. Due to the political nature and extensive media on this case, the FBI will maintain an extremely low profile. The Transnational Crime Unit concluded that the murder was a clear violation of Title 18, USC 2332 - International Homicide of a U.S. Citizen. One of the key elements of this criminal statute requires that the offense was intended to "coerce, or retaliate against a government or a civilian population."

112. (SBU) Comment: Stang's murder is forcing the federal government to confront Para's lawlessness and environmental degradation, a subject it has long opined on, but taken little action. By any standard, the government reaction so far has been strong: federal police have invested significant resources and the insertion of federal troops is a significant act. Stang and other activists had long sought the redistribution of land to the landless and environmental protection areas. The government had previously supported the concepts, but lacked the political will to take action. Stang's murder changed that. Nevertheless, Para is a huge region (larger than the states of Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico combined) with little infrastructure and much jungle. Illegal ranchers and loggers are well established there and have powerful political allies. Finding the Stang's killers will be a difficult task, dealing with the decades-old land issues even more complex. We will continue to monitor the investigation, and the overall situation, closely.

Danilovich